Government of
Saskatchewan

Annual Report
2000 - 2001

Saskatchewan
Highways and
Transportation

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Table of Contents

Letter of Transmittal 1

Deputy Minister's Letter 2

Department Overview 3

Department Vision, Mission, Goals and Guiding Principles 4

Areas of Focus

- Preserving the Transportation System 5
- Operating the Transportation System 5
- Constructing the Transportation System 5

Department Accomplishments

- Goal A: Ensure Infrastructure for all Modes is Operated at Appropriate Levels of Safety, Quality and Accessibility 6
- Goal B: Minimize the Long-Term Cost of Preserving the Highway System 9
- Goal C: Continually Improve Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy of Transportation Programs 10
- Goal D: Ensure that the Transportation System is Compatible with a Sustainable Environment 12
- Goal E: Continuously Improve Stakeholder Relations 13
- Goal F: Support Economic Development 14

Future Challenges and Opportunities

- Goal 1: A Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure 15
- Goal 2: The Transportation System Strengthens Economic Development and Serves Social Needs 15
- Goal 3: Safe Movement of People and Goods 15
- Goal 4: Healthy, Productive and Valued People 15

Appendices

Appendix A: Organizational Chart 17

Appendix B: Financial Overview 18

Appendix C: Legislation 21

Appendix D: Key Interest Groups 21

Appendix E: Glossary of Terms 22

Contact Information 23

Letter of Transmittal

Minister of
Highways and
Transportation

SASKATCHEWAN

Legislative Building
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3
(306) 787-6447

September 27, 2001

Her Honour The Honourable Lynda Haverstock
Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan

Your Honour:

As Minister responsible for Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation, it is my pleasure to respectfully submit the Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2001.

This report highlights the department accomplishments for this fiscal year as well as future goals.

Sincerely,

Pat Atkinson

Pat Atkinson

Deputy Minister's Letter

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan
Highways and
Transportation

September 27, 2001

Honourable Pat Atkinson
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Honourable Minister Atkinson:

I have the honour of submitting the Annual Report of the Department of Highways and Transportation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2001.

In the 2000/01 fiscal year, the department increased funding to better meet challenges in transportation. The total approved department budget for 2000/01 was the largest ever, at $274,994,000. This amount included an original estimate of $250,044,000 plus a special warrant of $24,950,000. Actual expenditures in 2000/01 were $274,952,000. The special warrant allowed the department to take advantage of favourable fall weather conditions; crews and contractors were able to complete 94 additional repair and improvement projects on 61 different highways across the province. The department stockpiled additional repair aggregate ensuring a timely response for spring road repair. Twinning on our National Highway System is important to the social and economic needs of the province and the safety of motorists. To support the provincial twinning initiative, work progressed on 81 km of roadwork on Highway Nos.1 and 16.

The Pasqua Street interchange near Regina on Highway No. 11 was opened in the fall of 2000. Built at a cost of $7.2 million, this interchange will improve safety at the high traffic volume intersection.

The department worked to minimize the long-term cost of preserving the highway system. This goal was assisted by use of studies, better use of new technology, research, and preparation of various strategies. For example, the department developed and retained more than 1 200 km of rail network that otherwise may have been abandoned. This was accomplished by providing technical, financial and advisory assistance. The Transportation Partnership Program (TPP) supported economic development in Saskatchewan and promoted more efficient, road friendly vehicle technology, while providing cost savings to truckers and additional revenues for the department.

This Annual Report includes our accomplishments in ensuring the transportation system is compatible with a sustainable environment, that we are continuously improving our relations with stakeholders, and that the department is working to support the economic development of Saskatchewan.

The department introduced the government purchase card program in December 2000 to improve the efficiency of processing invoices under $1,000. Approximately 30% of department invoices are now paid with use of a purchase card and the average invoice processing cost has resulted in administrative savings of $20 per invoice. Use of the purchasing card also means that in purchases where the card is used, businesses now receive payment instantly, rather than having a time lag between the date of purchase and when the invoice is paid.

In the continued pursuit of its Vision of *"Transforming Saskatchewan's Transportation Systems to Meet the Social and Economic Opportunities of the 21st Century"*, the department completed a formal review of its strategic plan. This review culminated in a renewed focus on the department's strategic direction. Four newly stated goals reflect the department's strategic focus for the year 2001/02 and beyond.

Madam Minister, the dedication and commitment exhibited by department employees to improving transportation in Saskatchewan, is surely a benchmark for all government departments.

Sincerely,

Harvey G. Brooks, Deputy Minister

Department Overview

The Saskatchewan Department of Highways and Transportation operates, maintains and regulates transportation infrastructure for the province. This infrastructure facilitates the movement of people and goods by road, rail, air and water. Provincially operated infrastructure includes 26 220 km of highways, 845 bridges, 18 airports in northern Saskatchewan, 12 ferries on the Saskatchewan River system and a barge on Wollaston Lake. The department provides advice and regulatory services for the province's shortline and industrial railways. The province's role is to ensure the safety of users, the public and the operators of rail lines within the province.

The total approved department budget for 2000/01 was the largest ever, at $274,994,000. This amount included an original estimate of $250,044,000 plus a special warrant of $24,950,000. Provincial highway expenditures were $274,952,000. The special warrant allowed the department to take advantage of favourable fall weather conditions; department crews and contractors completed 94 additional repair and improvement projects on 61 different highways across the province. The department stockpiled additional repair aggregate ensuring a timely response for spring road repair. An expanded engineering and winter gravel haul program was implemented in preparation for enhanced program delivery in the spring of 2001. The department employed 1441.2 full time equivalent positions in 2000/01.

The department owns, operates and maintains its own maintenance equipment fleet. The equipment is managed through the Highways Revolving Fund. The fund allows capital acquisition of equipment to be charged to the department's maintenance budget over several years based on actual use, rather than charging the actual capital cost to the department in the year of acquisition. The book value of the department's equipment fleet assets is about $45 million.

Department Vision, Mission and Guiding Principles

Vision

Transforming Saskatchewan's transportation systems to meet the social and economic opportunities of the 21st century.

Mission

- Developing and delivering programs and services;
- Providing leadership and expertise;
- Building partnerships; and
- Fostering a positive work environment.

Goals

A. Ensure infrastructure for all modes is operated at appropriate levels of safety, quality and accessibility;

B. Minimize the long-term cost of preserving the highway system;

C. Continually improve effectiveness, efficiency and economy of transportation programs;

D. Ensure that the transportation system is compatible with a sustainable environment;

E. Continuously improve stakeholder relations; and

F. Support economic development.

Guiding Principles

- Openness – Open in communications and listening to new ideas
- Honesty – Frank and truthful with everyone
- Accountability – Responsible for our actions
- Teamwork – Stronger when we work together
- Commitment – Committed to our Vision and living our Values

Areas of Focus

The department's activities are categorized into three main areas of focus:

- Preserving the transportation system;
- Operating the transportation system; and
- Constructing the transportation system

Preserving the Transportation System

Preserving the Transportation System includes maintenance, structural restoration and management of provincial highways, bridges, airports, and ferries to ensure the safe, orderly and efficient movement of people and goods. It provides for preserving the province's investment in transportation facilities.

The Rural Roads Strategic Initiatives Fund facilitates partnerships that support the strategic preservation management of low volume Thin Membrane Surface (TMS) highways through cost-effective, mutually beneficial arrangements with municipalities and First Nations to ensure delivery of acceptable levels of service for local residents.

Operating the Transportation System

Operating the Transportation System provides the delivery of a wide range of services to ensure the safe, orderly and efficient movement of people and goods. This includes pavement marking, signing, lighting, winter snow and ice control and ferry operations. Related operational services such as property acquisition and management, traffic engineering, trucking programs and preservation engineering services are delivered with this program. It provides enforcement of transportation legislation and regulations and developing new methods for moving goods by truck.

Operation of the province's highway network is facilitated by applying and administering standards and policies on:

- Roadside development;
- Access management;
- Roadside drainage;
- Traffic guidance;
- Traffic safety improvements;
- Management of other undeveloped highway properties, including aggregate resources;
- Operational highway planning; and
- Traffic counting

Professional and technical expertise is provided to rural municipalities concerning the municipal road network. The department works with Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH), to deliver the Municipal Heavy Haul, Traffic Count and Bridge Programs.

Constructing the Transportation System

Constructing the Transportation System includes the upgrading or new construction of provincial highways, bridges and airports. It includes development of engineering standards, design and construction management. It provides engineering services for major contracted preservation and maintenance activities.

Department Accomplishments

Goal A: Ensure Infrastructure for all Modes is Operated at Appropriate Levels of Safety, Quality and Accessibility

- In a continuing effort to be proactive in the reduction of workplace accidents, the department increased the breadth and depth of its safety audit program. Since the heightening of the program in 1999, Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) claims were reduced by 13%, from 120 claims in 1999 to 104 claims in 2000. The safety audits cover three main areas:

  - *Traffic Accommodation Audits* – examine the use of signage, cones, barricades and flag persons in the Orange Zone and hazard notification for motorists.
  - *Shop, Lab, Equipment Service Bay and Ferries Audits* – look for the reduction of hazards associated with equipment, chemical handling, storage, ergonomic environment and the basic general building environment.
  - *Workplace Audits* – inspect field operations, including the inspection of equipment, the use of safe operating procedures, personal protective equipment usage and the general working environment.

- To further the development of new traffic control procedures and increase safety in work zones for department workers and the traveling public, the department revised the Traffic Control Manual for Work Zones, conducted Work Zone Safety Audits and updated its traffic accommodation signage plans.

- Through the appointment of an Occupational Health & Safety coordinator, policies dealing with safety in contractor work zones were updated, construction site safety audits were performed and employee safety training was conducted.

- Occupational Health & Safety Enforcement Protocol was developed and implemented in cooperation with the Heavy Construction and Roadbuilders Association of Saskatchewan.

- To increase the scope of its Contractor Safety Certification Program, the department expanded this program to include all contracts in the Southern Administration District with a value more than $100,000.

- To increase efficiency through the use of new technology for locating and managing new gravel sources, Global Positioning System (GPS) technology is now used in all gravel pit surveys. Additionally, electro-magnetic prospecting equipment is now in use to assist in locating new gravel sources.

- In support of the twinning initiative, work progressed on 81 km of roadwork. This included:

  - 11 km on Highway No. 16 from Lashburn to Marshall was paved and opened to traffic in the fall of 2000.
  - 21 km of grading on Highway No. 1 from east of Sintaluta to east of Indian Head was finished.
  - 10 km of grading on Highway No. 1 from the Alberta border east.
  - Grading started on 12 km of new lanes on Highway No. 1 from east of Wolseley to east of Sintaluta.
  - Grading started on 9 km of new lanes on Highway No. 1 between 10 km and 19 km west of the Alberta border and at the C.P.R. Overpass near Kincorth.
  - Grading started on 17 km of new lanes on Highway No. 16 between Maidstone and Lashburn.

In 2000/01, department crews completed approximately 10,000 sign installations

• The Pasqua Street Interchange near Regina was opened in the fall of 2000. The project was completed at a cost of $7.2 million, and will reduce accidents at this high traffic volume intersection.

The Pasqua Street Interchange at Hwy 11 near Regina.

• To improve community access and transportation efficiency for the forestry industry in the North, the department completed work on the following projects:

» Partnership funding from a truck haul agreement was used to crush gravel for a strengthening project on 12 km of Highway No. 165 from Junction No. 155 to the east.

» Reconstruction of Highway No. 965 between Junction Nos. 155 and 903 was completed.

» Partnership funding from a truck haul agreement was used for 11 km of spot improvements on Highway No. 102 north of La Ronge and 5 km of alignment improvements on Highway No. 905.

» The department continued work on the multi-year reconstruction of Highway No. 909, the Turnor Lake Access Road. This work will be completed in 2001/02.

» The department completed the reconstruction of Highway No. 941 from Waterhen Lake Access to Junction No. 904 and started reconstructing Highway No. 951 from Highway No. 903 to the Waterhen Access Road and the Waterhen Lake Access Road. These projects will be completed in 2001/02.

» Through the Centenary Fund, the province surfaced Highway No.123 from Cumberland House to the Saskatchewan River and several roads around Cumberland House. The department also crushed gravel for a project to surface 5 km of Highway No. 955 from La Loche to Clearwater River Dene Nation.

Department crews painted 45 400 km of highway lines in 2000/01.

• The Transportation Partnership Program (TPP) supports economic development in Saskatchewan and promotes the use of more efficient, road friendly vehicle technology, while providing cost savings to the trucking industry and additional revenues to the department's Transportation Partnership Fund (TPF) for road improvement projects. During 2000/01, the TPP:

» Developed 16 new agreements, bringing the total number of agreements to 69.

» Performed nine full audits and 22 partial audits of partnership companies to ensure compliance to the terms and conditions of agreements.

» Generated revenue of $2.65 million.

» Contributed to the reduction of the number of accidents on provincial highways: TPP program vehicles had an accident rate of 0.63 accidents per million km travelled. This is less than one-half of the 1.4 accidents per million km recorded for all freight trucks operating in Saskatchewan.

» Developed the TPF Advisory committee, the mandate of which is to provide advice on the types of projects to be funded by the TPF. This committee, created by the Minister and chaired by the department, also has representation from the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Trucking Association and the Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan.

• In its continued efforts to reduce the number of heavy commercial vehicles removed from the road for serious mechanical defects and driver fatigue, the department's Transport Compliance Branch conducts random and scheduled roadside checks. The out-of-service rate for commercial vehicles in 2000/01 was 19%, a 3% decrease from 1999/00.

• The department increased the number of commercial vehicle inspections by 48%, from 4,363 inspections in 1999/00 to 6,464 inspections in 2000/01. This was accomplished by training more enforcement officers in the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Heavy Vehicle Inspections Program and placing a heavier emphasis on inspections.

• An integrated weight enforcement and awareness strategy was implemented in 2000/01. This included conducting numerous information sessions with industry, the general public, rural municipalities and at farm shows to encourage compliance with weight restrictions. A heavier emphasis was placed on weight inspections, resulting in a 20% increase in the number of overweight charges laid. The number of charges were 1,496 in 2000/01, up from 1,247 in 1999/00.

• To improve signing on provincial highways, the department initiated development of an enhanced sign inventory system and maintenance management system. Additionally, department sign crews were re-organized. These changes support improved sign replacement practices and will serve to optimize resource allocation for traffic control and guidance.

• To support long-range highway planning, the following studies were completed in 2000/01:

» Moose Jaw Highway No.1 traffic operations study.

» Regina Victoria Avenue East/Highway No.1 traffic operations study (from Prince of Wales Dr. to Tower Road).

» Saskatoon Highway No. 11 and Grasswoods Road functional study.

» Wynyard corridor study.

» Four lane functional study on Highway No. 1 from 5 km west of Gull Lake to the Alberta border.

» Four lane functional study on Highway No. 2 from Prince Albert to Highway No. 263.

» Highway No. 16 location study for the second bridge over the North Saskatchewan River at North Battleford.

» A study was completed for Estevan, in partnership with the City of Estevan.

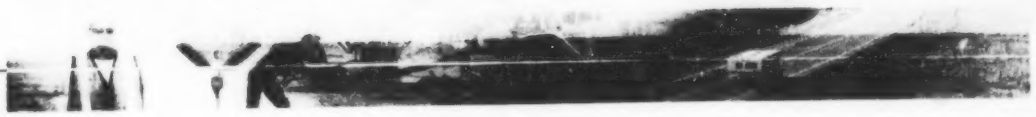
» Studies for Saskatoon and the Regina South East bypass are in progress, and will be completed in 2001/02

• Guidelines for the construction of recreational trails (such as the TransCanada Trail) within provincial highway right-of-ways were developed. These guidelines will provide direction for use of provincial highway right-of-ways, when other trail location options are not available.

• In its continued focus on employee wellness, the department created a Wellness Subcommittee as part of the department Occupational Health and Safety Committee. A wellness pilot in September 2000, including 48 employees from Saskatoon and Prince Albert, was well received. An expansion of this program is expected in 2001/02.

• To ensure our concerns were heard in improving the Bill to amend *The Canada Transportation Act*, the department led the submission to the Senate Committee on Transportation.

Department crews spread 60,000 tonnes of salt in the winter of 2000/01.



Department Accomplishments

Goal B: Minimize the Long-Term Cost of Preserving the Highway System

The department used 1,382,500 tonnes of aggregate in the 2000/01 preservation program.

- To ensure the development of a surface preservation program consistent with department goals, the department initiated the implementation of new Strategic and Tactical Asset Management Software to make short and long-term preservation programs more effective.

- To improve long-term pavement performance a study evaluating the effectiveness of various anti-stripping agents used in asphalt mix is underway. Data collection is complete, and the report is scheduled for delivery in 2001.

- To improve efficiency and reduce survey and design costs, the application of new technology and department survey and design procedures are being reviewed. The fieldwork has been completed, and the report will be delivered in late 2001.

- The department continued its research on low tire pressure technology (Central Tire Inflation Systems – CTIS) as a means of lessening the impacts of heavy truck haul on provincial highways. Preliminary research indicates that road damage is reduced when vehicles are equipped with CTIS. The department, in 2001/02, will complete a more detailed analysis of research findings.

- The department continues striving to reduce the impact of grain haul on the highway system by keeping heavy grain haul traffic on the rail system. To this end, the department facilitated the retention of more than 1 200 km of rail network that otherwise may have been abandoned. This was accomplished through the provision of technical, financial and advisory assistance to key stakeholders.

- To better assist field crews in planning, scheduling and tracking section preservation programs, the Maintenance Management System (MMS) was implemented throughout the department. 85 section crews were trained and are using MMS to more effectively plan, organize, direct, control, review, and evaluate their work activities.

- To prepare a Saskatchewan Strategy for Regional Railroad and Short Line Conversion, the department conducted an inter-provincial study on the viability of regional railroads. Analysis of branch line viability, exploring current legislation and industry behaviour was also conducted. Findings of these studies and introduction of recommended actions is expected in 2001/02.

- The department partnered with 33 municipalities on 20 projects to address traffic management issues on 375 km of TMS highways.

- To ensure an effective transition to the new transportation and grain-handling structure, the department led the development and implementation of the Provincial Grain Monitor.

- As part of its development of a provincial strategy for the deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), the department hosted an ITS Forum. This forum brought together stakeholders from throughout the province to explore provincial ITS opportunities and start the development of a provincial ITS strategy.

Department Accomplishments

Goal C: Continually Improve Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy of Transportation Programs

• The development of a knowledge-based Pavement Mix Design System to improve mix designs and long-term pavement performance is underway. Test sections will be constructed in 2001 for the gathering of data on fracture percentage as it relates to pavement performance.

• To improve the efficiency of processing invoices under $1,000, the government purchase card program was implemented in December 2000. 286 department employees have been issued government purchase cards, with these results:

» Approximately 30% of all department invoices are now paid using a purchase card.

» Purchase card usage means the average invoice processing cost has decreased from $30 to $10, resulting in an average administrative savings of $20 per invoice, or 200%.

» Use of the purchasing card means that in purchases where the card is used, businesses now receive payment instantly, rather than having a time lag between the date of purchase and when the invoice is paid.

• To promote long-term planning for facility replacement, repair and improvement, the department entered into the Millenium Partnership Agreement with Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation (SPMC). The purpose of this partnership is to provide increased value to the taxpayer through joint long range planning, business modeling, dispute resolution mechanisms, and better communication.

• To streamline processes and reduce administration costs, the General Provisions for the tender process were revised.

• As it continues to optimize the use of technology in support of a secure, flexible and reliable Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, the department underwent the following changes in 2000/01:

» Centralized management of IT within the department. This change created greater efficiencies in purchasing, support, development and project management for information technology.

» Started a change management process for IT within the department.

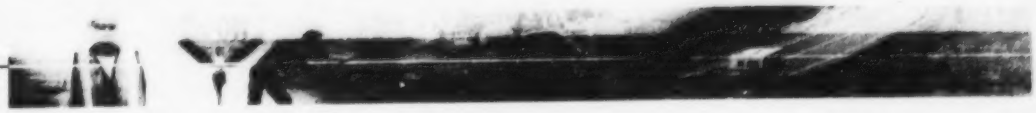
» Maintained 99.5 per cent uptime across the department IT systems.

• Moving forward with its mandate to establish and increase the development of effective Information Management (IM) solutions, the department introduced the use of wireless technology by providing Compliance Officers and others with increased access to remote IT systems.

• As part of the government-wide impetus to increase the development of department and inter-department partnerships for Information Technology systems solutions, the department was involved in the following in 2000/01:

» Provided leadership in the Executive Government CommunityNet testing and had representation on technical and management committees.

» Lead Executive Government on testing and directory setup of two IT projects (Exchange 2000 and Microsoft Active).



• To ensure best practices are being used department-wide for surface preservation, a system for better sharing improved work practices and innovations was developed as part of the Maintenance Management System. A new provincial advisory group reviews innovations, identifies best practices, evaluates new products, methods and techniques, and communicates these to all preservation crews.

• In its continued efforts to improve opportunities that maximize Aboriginal participation in the operation and management of the transportation system, the department drafted the Aboriginal Work Plan to address the emerging self-government initiative from a transportation perspective. Contracts for construction work in northern Saskatchewan now include a requirement for direct participation of northern residents during the project.

• The department developed the Terms of Reference for a Human Resource Plan, with succession planning as the highest priority. As a result, a Succession Plan was started to identify major occupational groups that will be affected by future retirements and to examine and recommend initiatives to mitigate the loss of those employees.

• To support the government's employment equity plan, the department developed a comprehensive Employment Equity strategy. The department hosted a Women's Forum, for women in management and non-traditional roles.

• To monitor and report on key transportation trends as input to policy development, the department undertook several initiatives, including:

  - Development of the monthly TranScan newsletter.
  - Coordination of a Futures Scan Workshop.
  - Development of the Report on External Trends.
  - Development of the Infrastructure Assessment Report.

• The department's Innovation Registry continues to give employees an avenue to share their innovative, knowledge, skills and ideas for improving our work environment. In 2000/01, 24 submissions were made by department employees. The top 3 innovations, as recognized by the Innovation Registry Committee were:

  - Brake Training Trailer, by innovators Fred Douglas, Herb Holloczek, Neil Robertsaw and Adrien Gobeil.
  - Drum Sand Spreader, by innovators Adrien Gobeil and Neil Robertshaw.
  - Portable Rumble Strip, by innovators Bob Gamble and Kelly Wyatt.

The brake training trailer innovation is air-driven and simulates a truck with all the brake systems running. Other organizations such as SGI and SIAST regularly use this department innovation.

Department Accomplishments

Goal D: Ensure that the Transportation System is Compatible with a Sustainable Environment

- The department completed a detailed review of its equipment assets, and developed a comprehensive 10 year Fleet Strategy. This plan will guide future procurement to meet long-term needs.

- The department developed innovative options to fund transportation infrastructure through additional resources for strategic road investments:

  - Through the Canada-Saskatchewan Agri-Infrastructure Program (CAIP), the department accelerated $3.1 million of additional thin membrane surface (TMS) road improvements. As part of this funding, the province, SARM and SUMA developed a mechanism to have $3.1 million available to assist potential community-based short line rail initiatives with purchasing abandoned rail lines and conducting relevant studies.

  - $2.25 million was obtained from the provincial Centenary Fund for strategic transportation initiatives.

  - The RM of Enfield assisted the department on the reconstruction of Highway No. 19 south of Central Butte. The RM accessed CAIP program funding and partnered with the department to complete an additional 5 km of strengthening on Highway No. 19.

  - Funding was obtained through the federal government's National Safety Code program for computer software and hardware to improve the in-car and roadside inspection capabilities of our traffic officers. This initiative provides compliance officers with roadside access to commercial vehicle safety inspection information and carrier safety profiles.

- In support of the national and provincial processes to develop our response to the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the department was involved in several initiatives:

  - Representation on the Saskatchewan Interdepartmental Working Group on Climate Change.

  - Participation on the national working groups for the Council of Ministers meetings.

  - Co-chairing the Transportation Working Group of the Stakeholders Advisory Committee on Climate Change.

  - Production of a report dealing with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

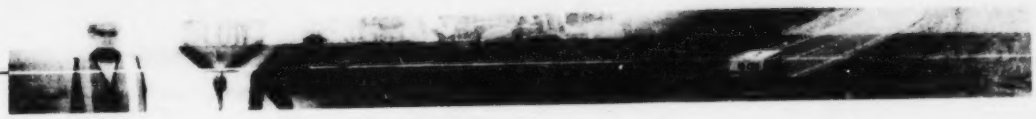
- In support of the national and provincial processes to ensure that project design and construction practices contribute to a sustainable biophysical environment, the department was involved in several initiatives:

  - Participation on the provincial Biodiversity Steering Committee.

  - Ensured all project proposals were reviewed by Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) to confirm compliance with provincial environmental legislation and regulations.

  - Ensured project proposals involving sensitive areas, protected species or native vegetation received intensive liaison with SERM conservation officers. Ensured project proposals that triggered federal interests were submitted to Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) for review.

  - Ensured project proposals involving streams were submitted to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) Habitat Management and Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) for review and approval to ensure compliance under the Fisheries Act and Navigable Waters Protection Act.



Department Accomplishments

Goal E: Continuously Improve Stakeholder Relations

The department handled more than 300,000 requests for winter road conditions in 2000/01, via its phone hotline and web page.

- In its continuing role as facilitator on provincial shortline and rail-related issues, the department's Shortline Advisory Unit worked with Area Transportation Planning Committees, communities, federal rail carriers and federal agencies regarding issues ranging from shortline development to technical advice on operating shortlines to elevator retention.

- To revitalize the department's use of technology in communications, a Communications Internet Manager was put in place. The primary responsibility of this position is to rebuild and improve the department's Internet and Intranet sites, with the goal of more timely and effectively communicating with internal and external stakeholders.

- To improve department communications, the department is preparing a series of corporate communication policies. The new policies, which will improve how the department deals with media interviews, corporate speaking engagements and presenting papers on behalf of the department, are being considered for introduction in the fall of 2001.

- The department continued to work with major stakeholders such as airport authorities, Saskatchewan Airport Council and other groups to improve air services in Saskatchewan. The department worked with stakeholders to provide input into the process on consolidation of service and to flight information centers, and with aviation stakeholders in the development of a provincial submission to the Canadian Transportation Act Review Panel.

- To strengthen the role of, and relationships with, Area Transportation Planning Committees (ATPCs), the department transitioned support for this important stakeholder group to the Operations Division. This change will allow the ATPCs to more fully participate in the decision-making process on regional transportation issues.

- The department hosted a Trucking Advisory Forum. This forum facilitated stakeholder input into Saskatchewan's special trucking programs.

- In its continued efforts to work with Northern stakeholders, including Aboriginal groups, to define the appropriate level of access to northern communities, the department undertook the following activities in 2000/01:

  - Worked closely with the northern Area Transportation Planning Committees to address the transportation challenges in the Northern region.

  - Worked closely with the Athabasca Basin Transportation Planning Committee to address issues around the Athabasca Road and re-supply costs through increased access to goods and services.

- Department executive and senior officials met regularly with key stakeholders, including the Heavy Construction and Roadbuilders Association of Saskatchewan, SUMA and SARM, to ensure effective dialogue and exchange of ideas.

Department Accomplishments

Goal F: Support Economic Development

• In its role as facilitator for the development of new shortlines and related businesses, the department's Shortline Advisory Unit provided technical and advisory assistance in the development of two new shortline railways.

• In its capacity of assisting financially in the development of shortline railways, the department negotiated with the federal government, SUMA and SARM to develop a mechanism to keep $3.1 million available to assist potential community-based short-line rail initiatives in purchasing abandoned lines.

• In its continued support of initiatives that encourage the development and retention of shortline and agricultural business in the province, the department provided financial and technical support in obtaining Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) decisions that encourage shortline development and appeals to CTA decisions that inhibit shortline development.

• To complete a grain haul corridor investment partnership among all levels of government, and to better use resources in maintaining our transportation system, the department developed the provincial framework and led the negotiation of the Prairie Grain Roads Program (PGRP) with the Federal government, SARM and SUMA. This program will provide $106 million from the Federal government over five years for road infrastructure in the province.

• To support economic development in the north, the department continued to include provisions in its contract documents to ensure that contractors maximize business and employment opportunities for local residents.

• In support of the province's expanding forestry industry, the department improved the transportation efficiency of timber haul and community access for northern residents. This was accomplished by:

» Upgrading 105 km of roads.

» Resurfacing 14 km of highways.

» Regraveling 210 km of northern roads on 15 different highways (Highway Nos. 2, 102, 106, 123, 155, 165, 167, 903, 905, 909, 914, 925, 951, 956 and 965).

• During the summer of 2000, the department was the largest government department employer of students, hiring 119 students who worked in 49 different communities. Students gained experience in a wide range of areas – from engineering and transport compliance to information technology and human resources.

• The department continued to support economic development in the north through the maintenance and operation of 18 northern airports, which in some cases are the only year-round access to northern communities. Through the federal government's Airport Capital Assistance Program (ACAP), the department received $2.5 million to improve the provincially operated airports at Uranium City, Stony Rapids, Fond du Lac and Wollaston Lake.

Department employees work in more than 100 communities around the province.

Future Challenges and Opportunities

In the continued pursuit of its Vision of *"Transforming Saskatchewan's Transportation Systems to Meet the Social and Economic Opportunities of the 21st Century"*, the department completed a formal review of its strategic plan. This review culminated in a renewed focus on the department strategic direction. The four newly stated goals reflect the department's strategic focus for the year 2001-02 and beyond:

Goal 1: A Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure

Goal 2: The Transportation System Strengthens Economic Development and Serves Social Needs.

Goal 3: Safe Movement of People and Goods

Goal 4: Healthy, Productive and Valued People

Goal 1: A Sustainable Transportation Infrastructure

Long-term sustainability will be achieved when the province is able to strike a balance between the size of the transportation network, the standard of roads in the network, the condition of the network and available funding levels. Transition to sustainability requires focus and discipline, but it is achievable. With the renewed strategic direction, the department has started its journey to long-term sustainability.

Goal 2: The Transportation System Strengthens Economic Development and Serves Social Needs

An effective and efficient transportation system is integral to strong economic growth and social progress. Modern logistics practices and increased competition are critical for improving transportation performance and efficiency. The support of bulk exports and value-added activities through access to enhanced markets continues to be an important, influential factor in the development of provincial transportation systems. This goal will keep the department focused on consideration of the economic and social drivers in its strategic resource allocation decision-making.

Goal 3: Safe Movement of People and Goods

Increasing safety on our roadways continues to be a priority for the department. Safe movement of people and goods is a fundamental expectation of transportation system users and department employees. Department resource allocation decisions must be considered in the context of maintaining or increasing the level of safety on the transportation system. The acceleration of the twinning initiative is one example of the commitment to improving safety on the transportation system, while at the same time increasing the efficiency with which people and goods are moved.

Goal 4: Healthy, Productive and Valued People

Having healthy and valued employees leads to greater satisfaction and higher productivity. The department remains dedicated to its valued employees as a strategic priority. This goal reflects an increased focus on recognizing employee contributions, workforce diversity and competency, employee safety, innovation and intellectual agility. Employment equity and continual learning are reflected here, as the department strives to deal with transitioning knowledge through effective succession planning.